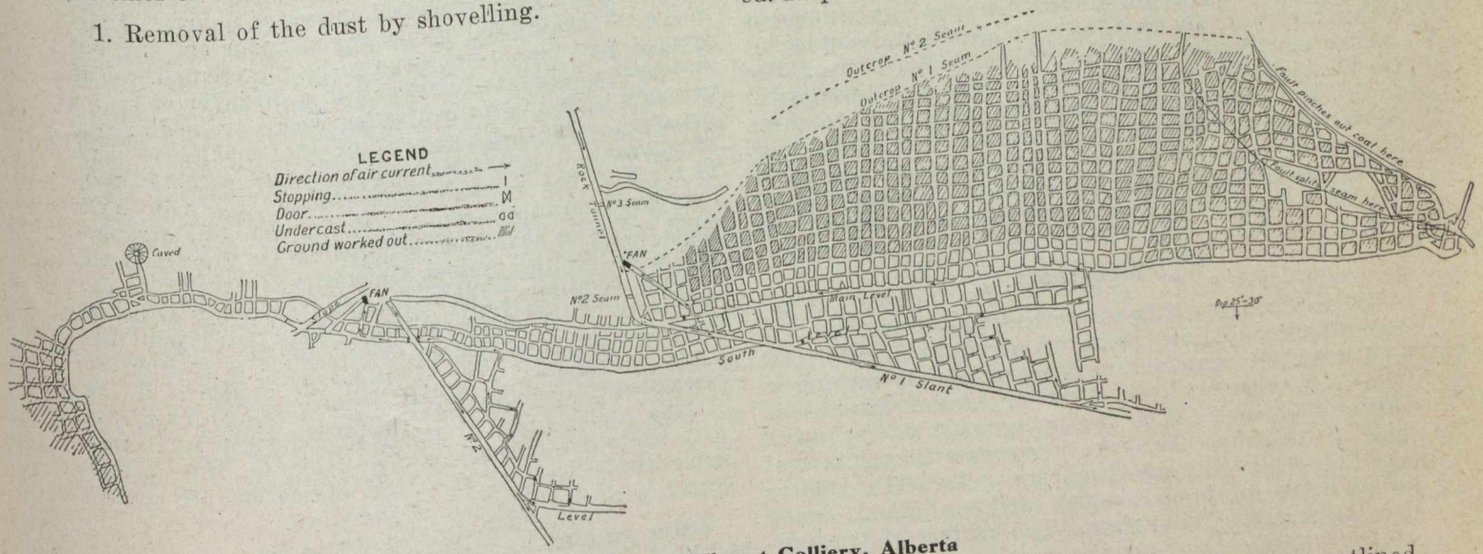
THE HILLCREST DISASTER

The great elements of danger in coal mining are gas and coal dust. Every precaution is taken to prevent the ignition of these by the use of approved safety lamps and permitted explosives. Shooting is not permitted where gas has been found and all shots are fired by shotlighters. Notwithstanding all these precautions explosions occur, and in the case of coal mining in the Crowsnest district, where the coal rolls down chutes to the level below, there is necessarily considerable dust made. When one considers that experiment has proven that an explosion was obtained when coal dust was present only to the extent of about one-fifth of an ounce per square ft. (this is much less than the dust present in the roadways of many mines), it can be seen how important the dust problem becomes.

Many remedies have been proposed to render the galleries of a coal mine safe from coal dust explosions, the chief of which are:

1. Removal of the dust by shovelling.



Mine Plan, Hillcrest Colliery, Alberta

2. Watering by sprays, etc.

3. The provision of "stone dust" or of "wet" zones on the main roads of the mine.

4. Use of salt, calcium-chloride or other inexpensive deliquescent compounds.

5. Intermixture of stone or shale dust by sprinkling the roads with the same.

6. Prohibition of dry tamping in shot firing.

7. Prohibition of coal dust tamping in any form.

It is hoped that the investigation be not only confined to the cause of the disaster at Hillcrest, but that it may be extended to cover all coal mining operations in the Crowsnest district.

Another proper field of usefulness would be in the Government taking some action towards educating the miners with regard to the nature and hazard of the work. The importance of this matter should not be neglected because, on account of the scarcity of miners in the West, the operators have to employ men with little or no experience in coal mining. In coal mining the safety of the mine depends to a certain extent on the intelligence of the least intelligent man employed, or, in other words, it is possible for the least intelligent man to blow up the whole mine.

W. J. D.

BEAVER LAKE.

In view of the recent discoveries of gold in the Beaver Lake district, Saskatchewan, the article by Mr. E. L. Bruce, of the Geological Survey staff, in this issue has a special interest.

WEST SHINING TREE.

Good reports come from West Shining Tree district. Gold was discovered there a few years ago, but there has as yet been little work done in addition to the exploration carried on by the holders of the claims. The prospectors bring out good specimens of ore, and believe that they have valuable properties. It is to be hoped that a development company will undertake the thorough development of some of the claims. Some of the prospects are quite attractive.

GAS IN NEW BRUNSWICK.

Maritime Oilfields, Ltd., reports that in deepening well No. 36, and after passing through a bed of shale and sandstone, a gas sand giving a flow of 2,000,000 cu. ft. per day was struck on July 13. This result has been obtained by pursuance of a programme outlined by Dr. Henderson for the deepening of the wells, and we are pleased to learn of the success of this work

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The Westinghouse strike at East Pittsburg was called off by the workmen on Thursday, July 9th. While the day set for return to work was Monday, July 13th, a large number of the men reported on the Friday and Saturday preceding. The works are now running full time.

Mr. Frank Robbins, who died at Los Angeles, California, U.S.A., on June 21, was a mining engineer well known on the Pacific Coast—in California, which had been his home for a number of years; in British Columbia, where, before he removed to Los Angeles, he was in charge of mines for Mackenzie and Mann, Toronto, first at the North Star in East Kootenay and afterward at the Brooklyn and Stemwinder at Phoenix, Boundary district; at Leadville, Colorado; and in other parts of the West. He had also been connected with mining in Honduras. For about 17 years he was a member of the American Institute of Mining Engineers. As a consulting engineer he had business connections over a wide extent of country. His death resulted after only a short illness with pneumonia.